



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

II.—EPICUREAN DETERMINISM IN THE ÆNEID.

Vergil was somewhat over twenty years of age when, caught in the intellectualistic movement then sweeping Italy, he threw aside his law studies and fled to Naples where Siro and Philodemus were planting the "garden" of Epicurus.

Nos ad beatos vela mittimus portus
Magni petentes docta dicta Sironis.

Of the life in the garden, where he now remained for many years, we catch just a glimpse here and there in the fragments of Philodemus, who once speaks of those that "gather at Naples to lead the life of philosophic inquiry with Siro at Herculaneum," and again, probably after Siro's death, addresses among his own listeners several of Vergil's friends by name, including apparently the poet himself.¹ It is doubtless this community of students that Cicero has in mind when in the *De Fin.* I, 65, he says: "At vero Epicurus . . . quam magnos quantaque amoris conspiratione consentientes tenuit amicorum greges! *Quod fit etiam nunc ab Epicureis.*"

In the Ciris Vergil called this school the *Cecropius hortulus*. The term was appropriate since after the death of Phaedrus when Patro had not been strong enough to uphold the position of the Athenian Κῆπος² the prestige of the school had gone westward with all else, and Siro and Philodemus, the leaders of the Syrian branch of the school, had succeeded in founding a new home at Naples. Vergil's sixth Eclogue, addressed to a fellow-student Quintilius Varus, is a fitting tribute to his master:

Namque canebat uti magnum per inane coacta
Semina terrarumque animaeque marisque fuissent.

The music of that song of creation the poet never forgot.

Nevertheless, Vergilian commentators noticing the Stoic imagery and phraseology of the eschatological passage in the sixth book of the Æneid have generally concluded that Vergil in his mature years rejected the Epicurean for the Stoic faith.

¹ See Hendrickson, *Am. Jour. Phil.* 1918, p. 35.

² Cf. Cic. *Ad Fam.* XIII 1.

Such is the view held for instance by Norden in his edition of the sixth book: "Vergil's youth fell in the enthusiastic days of the revolution; at that time he like thousands of others thought that he could find a retreat from the storms of life in the peaceful harbor of the Epicurean philosophy. But through the Augustan restoration the world seemed to be placed upon surer foundations again. . . . And so Vergil like many others turned from a *negative* to a positive faith."³ Sellar, Conington, Heinze and Glover also assume in their Vergilian studies that Vergil subsequently adopted Stoicism. A more consistent interpretation of the *Æneid* seems to me attainable on the hypothesis that the eschatological scene of the sixth book—which by the way is hardly Stoic—was adopted as a *mythos* for purposes of plot, and that the poet continued, while writing the *Æneid*, in the faith which he had avowed with enthusiasm in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.

To call the Epicureanism of Vergil's youth a "negative" creed as compared with Stoicism, is not this to miss completely its significance to the Romans? Our sophisticated age readily puts its finger upon the flaws of Epicurean logic, and our scientists express amazement at the Master's ignorance of Physics. But the Roman neophyte must be judged from his own past and not from the viewpoint of the modern expert. Untrained in metaphysical practice, ignorant of the tools and methods of exact science he had been granted no answers to his growing curiosity about nature except those offered by a naïve mythology which necessarily vanished into mists at the first critical inspection. Stoicism had first been brought over by Greek teachers as a possible guide, but the Roman, now trained by his extraordinary career in world politics to think in terms of experience, could have but little patience with a metaphysical system which constantly took refuge in a faith in aprioristic logic that had already been successfully challenged by two centuries of skeptics. The Epicurean at least kept his feet on the ground, appealed to the practical man's faith in his own senses and plausibly propped his hypotheses with analogous illustrations, oftentimes approaching very close to the cogent methods

³ Norden, *Aeneis*, Buch VI, p. 4, cf. p. 153.

of a new inductive logic.⁴ He rested his case at least on the processes of argumentation that the Roman daily applied in the law courts and the Senate and not to flights of metaphysical reasoning. He came with a gospel of illumination to a race eager for light, opening vistas into an infinity of worlds marvelously created by processes that the average man beheld in his daily walks. Could anything be more "positive" than this?

If it be objected that the end of all was fatalism, Vergil may well have answered that he had nowhere else been offered anything but fatalism; his native orthodoxy had never pretended to grant anything but a crude animism that expressed its theory of after-life in an annual offering of milk and wine to spirits that appeared in serpents' form to drink the offering, while Stoicism held to an irrefragable causal nexus and a final nirvana that offered scant satisfaction to the inbred Roman love of Gloria. Epicureanism at least made some account of man as a free agency while life lasted.

To the early Roman devotee also the ethical prejudice against Epicureanism seemed of little moment since his ethics had never before been necessarily dependent upon his creed. Its sanction rested rather on his ideas of family relationships, his view of his position in the state, and in his constitutional inheritance. He had never been taught to look to his religion or his philosophy to guide his conduct. And if the criticism were pressed home, it satisfied his sense of reason to appeal to the exemplary life of Epicurus himself. The works of Lucretius show how oblivious the Roman could be of the implication of immorality that the Greeks attached to this faith; could any pagan reveal a more genuine enthusiasm for righteousness than he?

Furthermore it is very doubtful whether the Romans gave much attention to the claim of Epicureanism to free men from the dread of hell. That fear could hardly have had any significance to a people whose religion did not even recognize it. Lucretius does indeed repeat his Master's words in this respect, but he may have been induced by the fallacious supposition that man's defensive instincts were somehow connected with a fear

⁴ Cicero calls the inductive method *similitudine et transizione percipere* (*De Nat. Deor.* I 105) translating the Greek phrase *μετάβασις καθ' ομοιότητα* of the Epicureans.

of punishment, or he may have spent much time of his life at the school at Naples where one observed Greeks rather than Romans. Later the striking poetry of Lucretius' third book must have kept the argument alive at Rome, but its recurrence must be viewed rather as a literary reminiscence than as a sound observation based on Roman experience. This aspect of the new creed could hardly have been the real source of fascination to the Romans.

It was rather the capacity of the Epicurean philosophy to free the imagination, to lift man out of a trivial mythology into a world of infinite visions, and to satisfy man's curiosity regarding the universe with tangible answers that attracted⁵ the Romans of Vergil's day to the new philosophy. Their experience was not unlike that of numberless men of the last generation who first escaped from the puerile cosmology of nonconformist orthodoxy by way of popularized versions of Darwinism pronounced by the experts indeed as pseudoscientific and wholly inadequate in logic. It was in fact the very positivism of Epicureanism that attracted the thousands of Romans. There is no suspicion of "negation" in the tribute to Siro in the sixth Eclogue, nor in the paean to Epicurus in the Georgics. And even in the *Æneid* when in search of a worthy theme for the banquet of Dido, the poet gives to Iopas the song of creation that Siro had sung.

Vergil was forty years of age, and not many from his death, when he published the Georgics, and the repetition of his creed in the first *Æneid* ought to warn us that his enthusiasm for the study of *Rerum natura* did not die. Indeed the *Æneid* is full of Epicurean phrases and notions. The atoms of fire are struck out of the flint (VI, 6), the atoms of light are emitted from the sun (VII, 527, and VIII, 23), early men were born *duro robore* and lived like those described in the fifth book of Lucretius (VIII, 320), there are still compliments for Memmius (V, 117), and Conington finds almost two hundred reminiscences of Lucretius in the *Æneid*, the proportion increasing rather than decreasing in the later books.⁶

⁵ Cf. Benn, *The Greek Philosophers*,² pp. 403, 454.

⁶ Servius VI 264, makes the explicit statement: *ex maiore parte, Sironem, id est, magistrum Epicureum sequitur.*

It is, however, in the interpretation of the word *fatum* and the rôle played by the gods⁷ that the test of Vergil's philosophy is usually applied. The modern equivalent of *fatum* is, as Guyau⁸ has said, *determinism*. Determinism was accepted by both schools but with a difference. To the Stoic, *fatum* is a synonym of providence whose popular name is Zeus. The Epicurean also accepts *fatum* as governing the universe, but it is not teleological, and Zeus is not identified with it but is, like man, subordinated to it. Again, the Stoic is consistently fatalistic. Even man's moral obligations, which are admitted, imply no real freedom in the shaping of results, for though man has the choice between pursuing his end voluntarily (which is virtue) or kicking against the pricks (which is vice), the sum total of his accomplishments is not altered by his choice: *ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*. On the other hand, Vergil's teacher, while he affirms the casual nexus for the governance of the universe: *nec sanctum numen fatis protollere fines / posse neque adversus naturae foedera niti* (Lucr. V, 309), posits a spontaneous initiative in the soul-atoms of man: *quod fatis foedera rumpat / ex infinito ne causam causa sequatur* (Lucr. II, 254). If then Vergil were a Stoic his Jupiter should be omnipotent and omniscient and the embodiment of *fatum*, and his human characters must be represented as devoid of independent power; but such ideas are not found in the Æneid.

Jupiter is indeed called omnipotent at times, but so are Juno and Apollo, which shows that the term must be used in a relative sense. In a few cases he can grant very great powers as when he tells Venus: *Imperium sine fine dedi* (I, 278). But very providence he never seems to be. He draws (sortitur) the lots of fate (III, 375), he does not assign them at will, and he unrolls the book of fate and announces what he finds (I, 261).

On VI 11, *mentem animumque*: "nam secundum Lucretium unum est mens et animus."

On VII 4, *si qua est ea gloria*: "secundum Epicureos."

The passages have been analyzed and discussed frequently. See especially Heinze, Vergil's Epische Technik, 290 ff., who interprets Zeus as fate; Matthaei, Class. Quart. 1917, pp. 11-26, who denies the identity; Drachmann, Guderne hos Vergil, 1887; MacInnis, Class. Rev. 1910, p. 160, and Warde Fowler, Aeneas at the site of Rome, pp. 122 ff.

⁸ Morale d'Epicure, p. 72.

He is powerless to grant Cybele's prayer that the ships may escape decay:

Cui tanta deo permissa potestas? (IX 97)

He cannot decide the battle between the warriors until he weighs their fates (XII, 725), and in the council of the gods he confesses explicitly his non-interference with the laws of causality:

Sua cuique exorsa laborem
Fortunamque ferent. Rex Jupiter omnibus idem
Fata viam invenient. (X 112)

And here the scholiast naïvely remarks:

Videtur hic ostendisse aliud esse fata, aliud Jovem.⁹

Again, contrary to the Stoic creed, the poet conceives of his human characters as capable of initiating action and even of thwarting fate. Æneas in the second book rushes into battle on an impulse, he could forget his fates and remain in Sicily if he chose (V, 700). He might also remain in Carthage, and explains fully why he does not; and Dido, if left *nescia fati*, might thwart the fates (I, 299), and finally does, slaying herself before her time¹⁰ (IV, 696). The Stoic hypothesis seems to break down completely in such passages.

Can we assume an Epicurean creed with better success? At least in so far as it places the *foedera naturae* above the Gods and attributes some freedom of will and action to men, for as we have seen in both of these matters Vergil agrees with Lucretius. But there is one apparent difficulty in that Vergil contrary to his teacher's usual practice permits the interference of the gods in human action. The difficulty is, however, only apparent, if,

⁹ Serv. ad loc. MacInnis, *Class. Rev.* 1910, p. 172, cites several other passages to the point in refutation of Heinze.

¹⁰ See Matthaei, *Class. Quart.* 1917, p. 19. Care must be observed not to press all the occurrences of *Fatum* and *fata* into philosophical connotations. At times the poet uses the word with his eye upon its derivation from *fari*: cf. *Fabor-fatorum*, I 261, *data fata secutus*, I 382, *fatis incerta feror* IV, 110. In such cases it is a metrical equivalent of "oracles" or "predictions." He also, like many prose writers, used the word in the common sense of bad fortune, or good fortune. Merquet's lexicon of Vergil notes the following meanings: *Weissagung, Bestimmung, Geschick, Schicksal, Los, Verhängnis, Unglück.*

as Vergil does, we conceive of these gods simply as heroic and superhuman characters in the drama accepted from an heroic age in order to keep the ancient atmosphere in which *Æneas* had lived in men's imagination ever since Homer first spoke of him. As such characters they have the power of initiative and the right to interfere in action that Epicurus attributes to men, and in so far as they are of heroic stature their actions may be the more effective. So far an Epicurean might well go, and must go in an epic of the heroic age. This is of course not the same as saying that Vergil adopted the gods in imitation of Homer or that he needed Olympic machinery because he supposed it a necessary part of the epic technique. Surely Vergil was gifted with as much critical acumen as Lucan. But he had to accept these creatures as subsidiary characters the moment he chose *Æneas* as his hero, for *Æneas* was the son of Venus who dwelt with the celestials at least a part of the time. Her presence in turn involved Juno and Jupiter and the rest of her daily associates. Furthermore, since the tale was of the heroic age of long ago, the characters must naturally behave as the characters of that day were wont to do, and there were old books like Homer and Hesiod from which every schoolboy had become familiar with their behavior. If the poet wished to make a plausible tale of that period he could no more undertake to modernize his characters than could Tennyson in his *Idylls*. The would-be gods are in the tale not to reveal Vergil's philosophy—they do not—but to orient the reader in the atmosphere in which *Æneas* had always been conceived as moving.

This comparison of Vergil's artistic conception with that of a modern like Tennyson working in the days of carefully authenticated historical novels may seem drastic, but I think the student of Vergil will agree that the Roman poet, while less afraid of anachronisms than the modern, worked somewhat in the same manner. He deliberately worked up his antiquarian lore¹¹ in every part so as to get a plausible setting for his characters of a bygone age. The seventh and eighth books show how thoroughly he did this for his Italian scenes. On the site of Rome

¹¹ Servius, Bk. VI, praef. *Totus Vergilius scientia plenus est*. It has been noticed that Cicero is also very careful to make the personae of his dialogs speak in character and avoid anachronisms.

Æneas found the cattle grazing in the valley where the forum lay in Vergil's day; the Capitoline hill was still *silvestribus horrida dumis*, though apparently inhabited by a powerful divinity (VIII, 348, 360). The rites being celebrated at his coming were those of the very ancient cults, of the Salii, the Potitii, and the Ara Maxima. The hovels of the city are thatched and the hero is invited to rest on a couch strewn with leaves. In the catalogue of the seventh book the cities of primitive Italy, once great, though mere names in the poet's day, are restored to their old time glory with insistent care. How could he know that the dilapidated and wrecked Praeneste had once extended her dominion over all the territory from Gabii to the river Amasenus unless he had resorted to the city's legends or deliberately inferred such greatness from its extensive walls and from such relics of art as we can now see in the museum of the Valle Giulia. Vanished cities like Antemnae, Crustumerium, Labicum, Saturae, and a score of others are all carefully repopled in his primitive Italy. Their arms and armor, the bronze and woven-willow shield, the war chariot, the *aclydes*, and *cateiae* might in part be suggested by Homeric reminiscences, but most of them are Italic and come from a careful search in Latin books of antiquities or from observing the ancient votive offerings heaped up in temples and the terra cotta revetments of old buildings pictured with processions of mounted and charioted warriors such as the archeologists have recently found in numbers at Rome, Lanuvio, and Velletri. Vergil has even learned that a part of the Faliscan tribe once peopled the ager Falernus near Cumae (VII, 724), that before the bay-tree was introduced into Latium the poplar wreath was used in ancient cults (Macr. Sat. III, 12, 4, citing Varro), and he seems also to have observed the ancient coin symbols of cities like Carthage, Gela, and Cumae whose mints had closed long before his day.¹²

Thus the poet deliberately crammed himself with *scientia*, as the puzzled Servius puts it, for the sake of creating a plausible background for his drama. And as he dived in Timaeus, Cato, Varro, and the stores of old art for material with which to recon-

¹² Van Buren, In Num. Chron. X 409 ff.; cf. Aeneid, I 444; III 702-5; VI 171. For the antiquarian studies of Vergil, cf. Ritter, Dissert. Phil. Halenses, 1901. On the enthusiasm for Italian antiquities among Romans of Vergil's day, see Norden, Neue Jahrb. 1901, pp. 249 ff.

struct primitive Latium, he studied the literature of the Homeric age for hints towards the proper staging of Æneas and his companions. Had he chosen a contemporary hero or one less blessed with celestial relatives there is no reason to suppose that he would have employed the superhuman personages at all. If this be true it is as uncritical to search for the poet's own conception of divinity in these personages as it would be to infer his taste in furniture from the straw cot which he chooses to give his hero at Evander's hovel. In the epic of primitive Rome the claims of art took precedence over personal creed, and so they would with any true poet; and if any critic were prosaic enough to object, Vergil might have answered with Livy: *Datur haec venia antiquitati ut miscendo humana divinis primordia urbium augustiora faciat*, and if the inconsistency with his philosophy were stressed he could refer to Lucretius' proemium. It is clear then that while the conceptions of destiny and free will found in the Æneid are at variance with Stoic creed at every point, they fit readily into the Epicurean scheme of things as soon as we grant what any Epicurean poet would readily grant that the celestials might be employed as characters of the drama if in general subordinated to the same laws of causality and of freedom as were human beings.

What then are we to say of the Stoic coloring of the sixth book? In the first place, it is not actually Stoic. It is, as Norden and others have shown, a syncretism of mystical beliefs developed by Orphic and Apocalyptic poets and mystics from Pythagoras and Plato to a group of Hellenistic writers, popularized by the later less logical Stoic philosophers like Posidonius and gaining in Vergil's day a wide acceptance among those who were growing impatient of the exacting metaphysical processes of thought. Indeed Vergil contributed something toward foisting these beliefs upon early Christianity though they were no more essential to that than to Stoicism.

Be that as it may, this mystical setting was here adopted because the poet needed for his own purposes a vision of incorporated souls of Roman heroes, a thing which neither Epicurean nor orthodox Stoic creed could provide. So he created this *mythos* as Plato for his own purpose created a vision of Er. The dramatic purpose of the *descensus* was of course to complete for Æneas the progressive revelation of his mission so skilfully

developed by careful stages all through the third book,¹³ to give the hero his final commands and to inspire him for the final struggle.¹⁴ Then the poet realized that he could at the same time produce a powerful artistic effect upon the reader if he accomplished¹⁵ this by means of a vision of Rome's great heroes presented in review by Anchises from the mount of revelations, for this was an age in which Rome was growing proud of her history. But to do this he must have a *mythos* which assumed that souls lived before their earthly existence. A Homeric limbo of departed souls did not suffice (though Vergil also availed himself of that in order to recall the friends of the early books). With this in view he builds his home of the dead out of what Servius calls much *sapientia*, filling in details here and there even from the legendary lower-world personages so that the reader may meet some familiar faces. It is in creating the atmosphere and peopling the place that he metes out punishment and rewards, based not upon religious sanction, but, as in Lucretius, upon humanitarian considerations, and so incorporates his incisive criticism of life that lifts this poetry far beyond anything uttered at the futile councils of the gods. For here Vergil is dealing with his own creations; there he was tied to creatures made long ago and in whom the Epicurean had little interest. Here again the setting is not to be taken literally, for of course neither he nor anyone else actually believed that prenatal spirits bore the attributes and garments of their future existence, nor is the poet concerned about the eschatology which had to be assumed for the setting; but his judgments on life, though afforded an opportunity to find expression through the characters of the scene, are not allowed to be circumscribed by them: they are his own deepest convictions.

It has frequently been said that Vergil's philosophical system is confused and that his judgments on providence are inconsistent, that in fact he seems not to have thought his problems through. This is of course true so far as it is true of all the students of philosophy of his day. Indeed we must admit that with the very inadequate psychology provided by the aprioristic

¹³ See Heinze, *Epische Technik*, pp. 82 ff.

¹⁴ This Vergil indicates repeatedly: *Aen.* V 737; VI 718, 806-7, 890-2.

¹⁵ Drachmann, *op. cit.* p. 115.

metaphysics no reasonable solution of the then central problem of determinism could be offered. But if the statement is intended to impugn Vergil's understanding or complete mastery of what the best teachers of his day had to offer, we may well question it in view of his years of communion with Siro and Philodemus.

There are of course passages of Stoic coloring, as for instance the lines in the *Georgics* that introduce the prognostications (I, 231-51). These have been traced back to astronomical theories which originated in the Stoic lecture room. Here Vergil used for the instruction of the farmer certain parts of Aratus and Eratosthenes on weather wisdom, doubtless knowing as well as the modern critic that these two authors had based their arguments upon astronomical ideas of Zeno. But since those ideas were in no vital degree inconsistent with his views he saw no need of throwing out a picture of poetic value simply because it did not happen to originate with his master. And this illustration will explain most of the passages where Stoic presuppositions are found.

Furthermore the Epicurean school permitted no little latitude to poets in the use of heterodox material. The fragment recently printed by Grenfell and Hunt (Ox. Pap. II, 31) grants that "the wise man will do well sometimes to do homage to the vulgar opinion about the gods," and Lucretius suggests (II, 655) that myths may be used for artistic purposes, a use which he permits himself in the picture of spring (V, 737) which Botticelli illustrated:

It Ver et Venus, et Veneris praenuntius ante
pennatus graditur, Zephyri vestigia propter
Flora quibus mater praespargens ante vias
cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.

Philodemus also, Vergil's own teacher, is so free in the use of picturesque mythology in his epigrams that the reader would never suspect that in the lecture room he constantly denied divine intervention in human affairs.

Vergil doubtless was a thorough student of the philosophy of his day, and, while recognizing that there were still unsolved problems, was a convinced Epicurean. But he was above all a poet who not only availed himself of the liberties that his school accorded poets, but freely accepted from any source ideas and images that furthered the artistic merits of his epic. The

literary critic need really have little difficulty in distinguishing between his figures of speech and his true convictions if he accepts him as a poet.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato, who had suffered much from unimaginative pupils, warned the reader not to take the "myth" literally. Vergil wisely gave the same warning at the end of his myth, but poetlike made the mistake of involving it in Homeric imagery. Despite the warning and despite the blunt statement of Servius (on VI, 893) that the portal of unreal dreams refers the imagery of the sixth book to fiction, our commentators still continue to deduce from it the articles of Vergil's creed.

TENNEY FRANK.

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.